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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4329  
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RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1556  
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND  
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SUBJECT: Syria/Qatar, Syria/Turkey, Mousa, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon,  
Palestinian Territories (2/6)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Feb. 6 reported a meeting between President Asad and Qatar's Crown Prince Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani on Feb. 5 which focused on current international and regional developments and bilateral relations between the two countries.

On Syrian/Turkish relations, papers reported that Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gull confirmed on Feb. 5 that the Syrian-Turkish relations have been witnessing continuous development. In an interview with monthly Turkish newspaper "Turkey's Bulletin," published by Turkey's ruling party "Justice and Development", Gull underscored that Turkey's ties with Syria are witnessing a great development day after day, pointing to the Free Trade Zone Agreement that went into effect between the two countries at the beginning of the current year. "Turkey's final target in developing ties with all neighboring countries is to create an atmosphere of peace and mutual confidence," Gull noted.

Papers also reported that on Feb. 5 Arab League Secretary General Amr Mousa underlined the necessity of reviving the peace process in the Middle East on all tracks. "Excluding any track from the peace process will neither serve it nor accomplish any notable result," Mousa said in an interview with Russian Television network Visti 24, pointing out that the International Quartet Committee for Middle East Affairs could never realize any noticeable result. Mousa pointed out Russia's main role in pushing the Middle East peace process forward.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad reviews current developments in the region and bilateral relations with Qatar's Crown Prince Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/6)

"Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul confirms that Syrian-Turkish relations are witnessing continued development" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/6)

"Arab League Secretary General Amr Mousa underscores the importance

of reviving the peace process in the Middle East on all tracks"  
(Government-owned Al-Thawra, 2/6)

"Fatah and Hamas are for making the Mecca meeting a success. Israel intends to release Marwan al-Barouthi to strike Palestinian reconciliation" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/6)

"A women's sit-in in Damascus in protest of Intra-Palestinian fighting" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/6)

"An Israeli incursion into Marwahin. Speaker of Lebanese Parliament Nabih Berri: The governing team is targeting the resistance" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/6)

"The US Congress besieges President Bush's Strategy in Iraq"  
(Government-owned Al-Thawra, 2/6)

"Two US soldiers and one British soldier killed in Iraq. More than one hundred Iraqis killed or wounded in Baghdad explosions"  
(Government-owned Tishreen, 2/6)

### 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"US Scheme Becomes Obvious"

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Ali Nasrallah, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, said (2/6): "John Bolton's revelation that the White House plans to divide Iraq and incite civil war in order to control oil sources, reflects unprecedented extremism in the US Administration's way of thinking and shows a policy characterized by foolishness and

recklessness....

"Dividing Iraq is part of the plan to fragment the entire Arab region.... If the US Administration has revealed all its hidden cards, or what it believed were hidden cards, and decided to remain obstinate and stubborn and to wage a tough confrontation with the Democratic majority, then this is an American affair that the American public and the world public are watching with interest. We, too, are watching it with much interest because it has a direct impact on our region, which is at the center of the political confrontations and wrangling in Congress....

"What should peoples and governments of the targeted region do? Could this inactive and often negative watch be considered an acceptable political performance? Are Democrats alone concerned with the confrontation with the administration, or should all the official and popular forces in the region wage this confrontation to the same extent? This is a question for all those who are willing to be called Arab moderates by Bush and Rice...."

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"Syria Plays Its Role"

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Ahmad Dawwa, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (2/6): "Syria does not wait for anyone to tell it to play its key role in the region. It is already doing this perfectly, but not based on the American vision, which is built on occupation and the theory of creative instability. Syria is playing the role that serves its interests and stability in the Middle East. This is why US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in the press conference of the International Quartet, did not repeat the worn-out tune of the American demands on Syria, as she had always done.

"It is obvious that the Bush administration is now convinced that Syria cannot do anything that runs against its own convictions. Syria is not one of the countries or governments that read American signals and instructions and implement them without objection or complaint. Rice, therefore, found that it was better for her simply to say that 'Syria knows what it should do,' in anticipation,

perhaps, of another time when the US Administration will be more able to revise its positions and listen to the American and international voices that call on it to hold dialogue with Syria.

"Unlike statements by other members of the Quartet, Rice's remarks clearly expressed Washington's rejection of the achievement of the desired peace in the region. She insisted on talking only about the Palestinian-Israeli negotiating track, although facts show that the current situation of the Olmert government does not allow it to enter into negotiations with Palestinians. The differences between the United States and the other members of the Quartet over the position toward Syria clearly appeared, increasing Washington's isolation within the committee and, consequently, its inability to pursue this policy in the future.

"It is obvious that the peace sought in the region has still not been listed on the agenda of the Bush administration, an agenda rife with files that threaten world security and stability. All American statements about peace at this stage are worthless, given American support for the sedition plans that seek to set fire to the whole region to evade the major problems that the policy of the neoconservatives has created in the Middle East.

"But international positions that conflict with and oppose the policy of force, and Bush's inability to cover the failure of his policy, which receives strong opposition in the American decision-making establishments, leave some hope in the middle of this dark American picture."

Corbin